

## A Study of Old English Period (450 AD to 1066 AD)

Muhammad Javed

M. A. English Literature

Government College University

Faisalabad, Pakistan

dj211rb@gmail.com

### Abstract

In this study, the researcher has talked about Old English or Anglo-Saxons history and literature. He has mentioned that this period contains the formation of an English Nation with a lot of the sides that endure today as well as the regional regime of shires and hundreds. For the duration of this period, Christianity was proven and there was a peak of literature and language. Law and charters were also proven. The researcher has also mentioned that what literature is written in Anglo-Saxon England and in Old English from the 450 AD to the periods after the Norman Conquest of 1066 AD. He also has argued that from where the composed literature begun of the era with reference to the written and composed literature. The major writers of the age are also discussed with their major works. There is slightly touch of the kings of the time have been given in the study with their great contribution with the era. The researcher also declared that what kinds of literary genres were there in the era. It is the very strong mark that Anglo-Saxon poetic literature has bottomless roots in oral tradition but observance with the ethnic performs we have seen elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon culture, there was an amalgamation amid custom and new knowledge. It has been also

declared that from which part literary prose of Anglo-Saxon dates and in what language it was written earlier in the power of Ruler Alfred (governed 871–99), who operated to give a new lease of life English culture afterwards the overwhelming Danish attacks ended. As barely anybody could read Latin, Alfred translated or had translated the greatest significant Latin manuscripts. There another prominent thing discussed in the study which is the problem of assigning dates to various manuscripts of the era.

Keywords: Who are Anglo-Saxons? History (450 AD to 1066 AD), Old English Literature, No Exit Date and Anglo-Saxon's writers.

### Introduction

This study encompasses the major two topics: Old English History and literature. Old English period is also known as the Anglo-Saxon period. This era starts from 450 AD and ends in 1066 AD. By reading this research paper the reader will become greatly aware of this period. The researcher has mentioned slightly each and everything related to this era. The reader will know what the best poetry were and prose at that era. He will learn about the major writers of the age. In history the age covers the account of medieval Britain that begins from the end of Roman rule (Republican period of ancient Rome). It is an age broadly known in European history as the Migration Age, the migration of populates in German. This was an era of strengthened human immigration in Europe. the traditional name for this era is the Heptarchy and it has not been used by scholars since the early twentieth century as it provides the impression of a single political construction and does not afford the "chance to treat the history of anyone realm as an entire". In the second category of the research which is literature which a major problem of assigning the dates of the works. The reader will learn what the ways the writer of the age have used to write their manuscripts and what the major problems of those ways they faced. He also mentioned the association of the kings of the age with literature. The language of this research is very concise and lucid. The researcher has

used the communication skill to enlighten this wide-ranging topic in a few pages. Each and every given in the paper is completely verified.

## Literature Review

### 1) Old English or Anglo-Saxon Period

J. Campbell (1986) mentioned that the Old English language period is also known as Anglo-Saxon period. Its duration is almost 450 AD to 1066 AD. Historically, Anglo-Saxon, the period used to label some member of the Germanic inhabits who, from the 5th century Common Era to the time of the Norman Conquest (1066), peopled and governed lands that are today part of Wales and England in other words, in other words, it was a cultural group who occupied Great Britain (It includes the nations of Scotland, England and Wales) from the 5th century. They were made up of people from Germanic tribes (Ethno-linguistic group of Northern European origin) who moved to the island from mainland Europe, native British groups and their offspring who adopted numerous features of Anglo-Saxon language and culture; the ethnic basics placed by the Anglo-Saxons are the footing of the modern English lawful classification and of numerous features of English society. M. Alexander (2000) Argued that the modern English language is obliged over half its words together with the maximum common words of everyday speech to the language of the Anglo-Saxons. E. Albert (2017) described that this period contains the formation of an English nation with a lot of the sides that endure today as well as the regional regime of shires (A shire is a traditional term for a division of land, found in Great Britain, New Zealand and Australia some other English-speaking kingdoms) and hundreds. For the duration of this period, Christianity was proven and there was a peak of literature and language. Law and charters were also proven.

2). The primary history of Anglo-Saxon (410 AD to 660 AD).

S. B. Greenfield and D. G. Calder (1996) suggested that the primary old English (The Anglo-Saxon) age covers the account of medieval Britain that begins from the end of Roman rule (Republican period of ancient Rome). It is an age broadly known in European history as the Migration Age, the migration of populates in German. This was an era of strengthened human immigration in Europe. According to J. Campbell (1986) the immigrants were Germanic tribes such as the Vandals, Frisii, Suebi, Lombards, Goths Angles, Saxons and Franks. They were far ahead hard-pressed westwards by the Bulgars, Alans. Slavs, Avars and Huns, The immigrants to Britain might also have involved the Rugini and Huns.

3). Anglo-Saxon (660 AD to 899 AD)

M. Alexander (2000) declared that the 660 the political map of Lowland Britain had advanced by means of minor lands merging into kingdoms, and from this time greater kingdoms started controlling the smaller kingdoms. The progress of kingdoms, with a specific ruler being documented as an overlord developed out of a primary loose structure that, Higham believes, is connected back to the original feodus. E. Albert (2017) declared that the traditional name for this era is the Heptarchy ant it has not been used by scholars since the early twentieth century as it provides the impression of a single political construction and does not afford the "chance to treat the history of anyone realm as an entire".

Simon Keynes ( is present Elrington and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Celtic at Cambridge University and Norse, and a Fellow of Trinity College) proposes that the 8th and 9th century was an era of social booming which shaped firmness equally below the economic, Thames and above the Humber. Sundry areas prospered and their effect was sensed across the continent, on the other hand in between the

Thames and Humber, one the political object produced in influence and power and to the East these growths in Britain attracted heed.

4). 10<sup>th</sup> century (899 AD to 1066 AD).

S. J. (2001) discussed in his study that an agenda for the important events of the 10th and 11th periods is delivered by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. On the other hand law-codes, charters and currencies supply detailed data on many features of the kingly regime, and the enduring works of Anglo-Latin and dialect literature, along with the many manuscripts written in the 10th century, appear in their various ways to the energy of church culture. However, as Simon Keynes (present Professor of Anglo-Saxon) proposes "it does not follow that the 10th century is better understood than more sparsely documented periods".

K. Harrison (2010) stated that throughout the way of the 10th century, the West Saxon rulers prolonged their authority first in excess of Mercia, then into the southern Danelaw, and as a final point over Northumbria, in that way striking an appearance of political unity on occupiers, who on the other hand would keep on aware of their own taxes and their distinct pasts. The status, and indeed the pretentiousness, of the kingdom enlarged, the organizations of regime wired, and monarchs and their go-betweens sought in different ways to begin social instruction. This procedure began with Edward the Elder who with his sister, Æthelflæd, Woman of the Mercians, originally, charters disclose, fortified people, to purchase estates from the Danes, in so doing to restate some degree of English effect in the territory which had tumbled under Danish control. David Dumville proposes that Edward may have prolonged this policy by rewarding his promoters by way of grants of land in the territories afresh occupied from the Danes, and that any charters allotted in respect of such donations have not endured. When Athelflæd passed away, Mercia was engrossed by Wessex. From that opinion

on there was no competition for the throne, so the house of Wessex turns out to be the presiding house of England.

S. B. Greenfield and D. G. Calder (1996) said that the movement from a higher to a lower level of the Norman Conquest and England is relating to several generations, multi-family sequence problem produced in excessive part by Athelred's ineffectiveness. By the time William from Normandy, detecting a chance, landed his attacking force in 1066 AD, the best of Anglo-Saxon England had improved, even though much of the society and culture and had to keep on the same.

#### 5). Old English Literature

Stanley B. Greenfield and Daniel G. Calder (1996) declared that the Anglo-Saxon literature or old English literature covers literature written in Anglo-Saxon England and in Old English from the 450 AD to the periods after the Norman Conquest of 1066 AD. "Cædmon's Hymn", (Poem by Cædmon) written and composed in the seventh century, according to Bede, is frequently considered as the oldest enduring poem in English. It means the old English literature is started from the seventh century.

#### 6). Poetry

C.L. Wrenn (1967) argued that the Old English literary works encompass genera such as sermons, hagiography, epic poetry, Bible translations, chronicles, legal works, mainly the riddles, Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and some others. In all above-mentioned genera there are approximately 400 enduring texts from the period, an important corpus of both widespread interest and expert research. J. Earle. (1884) explained in his study that the manuscripts practice a different Roman alphabet, but Anglo-Saxon runes or futhorc (The futhorc was an

improvement from the 24-character Elder Futhark) are used in beneath 200 writings on objects, sometimes varied with Roman letters.

This work is noteworthy for being in the Old English in the primary medieval period: When nearly all other printed literature was in Latin at this period, but in line for to Alfred's programme of vernacular literateness, the oral ethnicities of Anglo-Saxon England over up being changed into writing and conserved. H. Magennis (2011) revealed that we are obliged much of this conservation to the monks of the 10th century period, who completed at the very smallest the replicas of a maximum of the legendary manuscripts that still really exist. Texts were not mutual items. They were lavish and firm to create. First, sheep or cows had to be thrashed and their skins bronzed. Then populaces had to choose to use this leather for texts rather than for any of the other stuff leather can be used for. M. C. Amodio (2013) clarified that it was a kind material made from the skin of an animal by tanning or an alike procedure. The leather was then worn, pushed, and cut into sheets, which were stitched into paperwork (books). Formerly, the inks had to be prepared from oak galls and other elements, and the books had to be handwritten by monks (A monk is a person who performs religious austerity) sing quill pens. Every copy of the book was slightly dissimilar from every other one, even if they are copies of each other, for the reason that every book copier had different handwriting and prepared dissimilar mistakes. S. B. Greenfield and D. G. Calder (1996) A said that we can occasionally classify separate book copier from their handwriting, and we can frequently estimate where manuscripts were written because different centres of manuscript production penned in diverse polishes of hand.

According to J. J. Conybeare (1826) there are four major poetic manuscripts of Old English poetry:

- The Vercelli Book.
- The Exeter Book.

- The Junius Manuscript.
- The Nowell Codex or Beowulf Manuscript.

J. J. Conybeare (1826) declared that the greatest and famous lyric poems are

- The Wanderer.
- The Seafarer.
- Deor .
- The Ruin.

F. P. Magoun, Jr. (1953) said that the above lyrics poems are found in the Exeter Book, whereas the Vercelli Book has The Dream of the Rood and some of which is also fixed on the Ruthwell Cross. The Franks Casket also has fixed riddles, a widespread form with the Anglo-Saxons. Old English worldly poetry is typically categorized by a somewhat depressed and thoughtful cast of mind, and the grim determination establish in The Battle of Maldon, recounting an act in contradiction of the Vikings in 991 AD. This is from a volume that was misplaced in the Cotton Library fire of 1731, but it had been recorded before.

F. P. Magoun, Jr. (1953) declared that it is very strong mark that Anglo-Saxon poetic literature has bottomless roots in oral tradition, but, observance with the ethnic performs we have seen elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon culture, there was an amalgamation amid custom and new knowledge. Therefore, all Anglo-Saxon poetry has mutual features, we can also recognize three elements: religious poetry, which contains poems about precisely Christian subjects, such as the saints and cross; epic poetry or Heroic, such as Beowulf. It is an Old English epic poem containing of 3182 alliterative long lines. It is probably the oldest persisting lengthy poem in the Anglo-Saxon period and is usually named as one of the greatest significant works of Anglo-Saxon literature. It was composed in England sometime between the eight and the early eleventh century. The author was an unidentified Anglo-Saxon poet mentioned by scholars as the “Beowulf poet.”



The poem is set in Scandinavia. Beowulf, a hero of the Geats arrive to the help of Hroðgar, the king of the Danes, whose mead hall in Heorot has been under attack by a monster recognized as Grendel. Afterwards Beowulf murders him, Grendel's mom attacks the hall and is then also overpowered. Victorious, Beowulf goes home to Geatland and later turn out to be king of the Geats. After a duration of fifty years has spent, Beowulf conquers a dragon but is fatally injured in the fight. After his passing away, his attendants entomb him in a tumulus, a funeral knoll, in Geatland.

J. J. Conybeare (1826) stated all poem survives in the text known as the Nowell Codex, placed in the British Library. It has not any title in the original text but has come to be recognized by the designation of the story's central character. In 1731, the manuscript was critically smashed by a fire that swept through Ashburnham House in London that had an assortment of medieval texts collected by Sir Robert Bruce Cotton.

J. J. Conybeare (1826) discussed that interminably wholly old English poetry was divided into three groups:

- Cædmonian (it was the biblical paraphrase poems)
- Heroic
- "Cynewulfian," named after Cynewulf, one of the only named poets in Old English.

#### 7). The prose in Old English

C.L. Wrenn (1967) stated that Anglo-Saxon literary prose dates from the latter part of the Old English era. The prose was composed in Latin earlier the time in power of Ruler Alfred (governed 871–99), who operated to give a new lease of life English culture afterwards the overwhelming Danish attacks ended. As barely anybody could read Latin, Alfred translated or had translated the greatest significant Latin manuscripts. He also fortified

writing in the dialect. Didactic, religious, and educational prose was written, and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle perhaps started in Alfred's time as a historic record, sustained for over three centuries. The two distinguished Anglo-Saxon prose authors were Ælfric, Abbot of Eynsham, and his contemporary Wulfstan, primate of York. Their addresses were written in the late 10th or early 11th centuries set a customary for homiletics.

H. Magennis (2011) said that an excessive deal of Latin poetry and prose was written throughout the Old English era and of historic along with literary curiosity, it delivers an outstanding record of the early progress of the church in England and reproduces the outline and early effect thereof Latin-European culture.

#### 8). Problems of Assigning Date

According to C.M. Hills and T.C. O'Connell (2009), in the old English literature few poems can be dated as thoroughly as Caedmon's "Hymn." King Alfred's works fall into the late tenth century, and Bede composed his "Death Song" within fifty days of his death on May 25, 735 AD. Historically, the poems such as "The Battle of Maldon" (after 991) and "The Battle of Brunanburh" (after 937) are secure by the dates of the occasions they memorialize. A translation of one of Aldhelm's riddles is originated not only in the Exeter Book but similarly in an early tenth-century text at Leiden, Neth and as a minimum, a part of "The Dream of the Rood" can be dated by an extract imprinted on the eighth-century Ruthwell Cross. But in the nonappearance of such signs, the Anglo-Saxon poems are solid to date, and the intellectual consensus that furthestmost were composed in the Midlands and the North in the eighth and ninth centuries provided way to indecision throughout the last two decades of the twenty century. Many now hold that "The Wanderer," *Beowulf*, and other poems once expected to have been written in the eighth century are of the ninth century or far

ahead. For furthestmost poems, there is no academic accord outside the certainty that they were written between the eighth and the eleventh centuries.

9). The writers of the Old English Period.

a). Cædmon (650 AD -680 AD).

G. A. Lester (1974) argued that the Cædmon has the difference between being the first English poet recognized by name from whom work has lasted of his two important seventh-century contemporaries, Aldhelm possibly headed him, but his English verses have not lived. The second, Cynewulf, employed four religious poems with runic letters demonstrating his writing, but he possibly survived somewhat later than Cædmon. The only source of evidence on Cædmon's life is 731; Ecclesiastical History of the English People by Saint Bede the Venerable (c. 673-735). Bede, a monastic living in the cloister at Jarrow, required to account for the growth of Christianity in England from Roman eras to his own day. He was mainly anxious with finding the separations existing within the two chief branches of English Christendom. As a result, all that he wrote though much was historically right had a superseding religious determined.

G. A. Lester (1974) mentioned that the story of Cædmon is shown as the source of spiritual or religious poetry in the English dialect. According to Bede, Cædmon was a humble, poorly educated or illiterate herdsman, perhaps in a job on a monastic landed estate. For the duration of celebrations or feasts, it was the tradition to pass the harp around the table in order that each believer might sing in chance. Lacking the skill to sing or escort himself, Cædmon frequently sensed insufficiently and customarily left the table before the harp got him. One evening, he was given to guard over the domestic animals despite the fact the others celebrated, and on this time he fell asleep at the cattle pens. G. A. Lester (1974) declared that in a dream, an unfamiliar person seemed to him and said, "Cædmon, sing me something." At

first, Cædmon complained that he was unable, but he was told that he had to sing. When he makes inquiries about what he should sing, the unfamiliar person responded, “Sing about the Creation.” Cædmon then started to recite verses creating a nine-line hymn in Old English repetitive verse.

G. A. Lester (1974) said that after Cædmon sang his poem to his superior, he was taken to the Abbess Hilda, who was in custody of a joint nunnery and cloister at Whitby. After hearing his poem, she decided that Cædmon was really enthused, and she advised him to turn out to be a monk, even though he was further than the normal age for entrance into the monastic life. He arrived at the cloister at Whitby and devoted the rest of his life to poetry and monastic discipline.

As a monastic, Cædmon created divine poems founded on biblical manuscripts. Bede argues that he headed to others reading biblical passages aloud and then shaped the lines into Old English verses. Separately from Cædmon’s work as a poet, Bede describes little about his life, but Bede embraces a full account of Cædmon’s death in a passage intended to teach piety. He ended his life by falling quietly and serenely asleep.

b). Bede (673–735).

C.L. Wrenn (1967) stated that the Saint Bede was a monk of the twin cloisters of Jarrow and Wearmouth in north-eastern England. He was well-known in his era as one of the greatest and brilliant writers of Europe. He was prepared a doctor of the Church in the nineteenth century. He wrote poems in Old English and translated the Bible into the English language. We have a short poem called "Bede's Death Song" and a lengthier poem (which may not be by Bede) called "Doomsday." He was also a historian. He was the author of “*Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*” It consists of the history of English people. This is the main source of old English history.

c). Alfred, King (849-899)

B. Yorke (1990) stated Alfred, King (in Dark Ages) the greatest well-known of Old English kings, called 'Alfred the Great'. He was a West-Saxon and expected the leadership of his civic in 871 and was directly challenged by problematic armed engagements with the Vikings who were persistent south. Alfred was also concerned with the improvement of monastic life and had a lot of translations prepared which are important memorials of Old English in early West-Saxon (Yorke, B. 1990)

D). Ælfric (955 AD – 1020 AD, Dark Ages).

J. Earle. (1884) identified that Ælfric was a member of a religious community (monk) of the late Anglo-Saxon era who wrote productively, frequently on linguistic matters. Ælfric of Eynsham was an English abbot, as well as a perfect, productive writer in Old English of hagiography, homilies, biblical commentaries, and other genres. Separately from his *Catholic Homilies* and *Lives of the Saints*, we have a *Latin grammar* with a glossary which was compiled in English. His *Colloquium* was proposed to recover information of Latin amongst his pupils. Ælfric worked as a member of a religious community in the Benedictine monastery of Winchester and later at Eynsham where he became abbot around 1006.

E). Cynewulf

J. Earle. (1884) said that he is known for his religious works, Cynewulf is considered as one of the pre-eminent figures of Anglo-Saxon Christian poetry. Cynewulf is merely a name. Four poems in Old English encompass a sign implied into the manuscript in runes. They are *Elene*, *Christ II*, *The Fates of the Apostles* and *Juliana*.

Methodology

The major focus of the Methodology is to describe the history and major works of Old English literature.

#### Research Question

1. What is the literature of Old English Period?
  - a) What is the history of Old English literature?

#### Data Collection

The researcher used different books regarding old English literature and history in order to collect the data. Each and everything is mentioned in the research is completely verified.

#### Finding.

In order to prove the research question, the researcher honestly gave everything in a lucid and concise manner. Anglo-Saxons were immigrants. They were made up of different tribes: the Angles, Saxons and Jutes. There was a massive battle between the Britons and Saxons. One of the greatest impressive warrior-kings was Penda. This era was the era of English language development and the creation of England. The Anglo-Saxons shaped England and provided her with their language. Anglo-Saxons distributed their conquest into seven realms, Wessex, East Anglia, Sussex, Kent, Essex, Mercia and Northumbria.

#### Discussion and Conclusion

Old English literature or Anglo-Saxon literature covers works written in Anglo-Saxon throughout the 600-year Anglo-Saxon era of Britain, from the mid of the fifth century to the Norman Conquest of 1066 AD. There was a very huge problem of that era was assigned the dates to the works. In the old English literature, a few poems can be dated as thoroughly

as Caedmon's "Hymn." King Alfred's works fall into the late tenth century and Bede composed his "Death Song" within fifty days of his death on May 25, 735 AD. Historically, the poems such as "The Battle of Maldon" (after 991) and "The Battle of Brunanburh" (after 937) are secure by the dates of the occasions they memorialize.

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### Future work

The researcher will work on all history of English literature (from 450 AD to 20<sup>th</sup> century).